

NEWS RELEASE

Public Information From:

Franklin County Emergency Management and Homeland Security
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Emergency Managers Help Local Somalis Prepare For Spring Severe Weather

Community Meeting in Northland Area Tackles Language, Cultural Barriers to Boost Tornado Safety

(COLUMBUS, OHIO) – Franklin County emergency managers met with local Somali residents May 6 to help them better protect themselves and the community when disaster strikes.

Michael R. Pannell, director of Franklin County Emergency Management and Homeland Security (FCEM&HS), led a bi-lingual presentation about spring severe weather preparedness at Somali Women and Children's Alliance (SWCA), located inside the Global Mall at 2210 Morse Rd. in northeast Columbus.

"Our goal is to overcome language and cultural barriers to help local Somali residents be better prepared for life-threatening emergencies such as tornadoes," Pannell said. "Outreach like this can make our entire community safer."

Pannell and FCEM&HS staff presented information and answered questions about weather alert radios, the county's outdoor warning sirens, and springtime severe weather hazards such as tornadoes, thunderstorms and flooding.

The meeting was part of a larger outreach initiative by the Citizen Preparedness Subcommittee of the Franklin County Government Somali Work Group. The Work Group was convened in 2009 by County Commissioner John O'Grady to foster a coordinated government response to the needs of the thousands of Somali immigrants in central Ohio.

Subcommittee participants include FCEM&HS, African Refugee Education and Cultural Services, American Red Cross of Greater Columbus, Columbus Division of Fire, Columbus Public Health, Franklin County Board of Health, Franklin County Sheriff's Office, HandsOn Central Ohio, Helping Africans in New Direction, Horn of Africa Community Center, Somali Community Access Network, Somali Community Association of Ohio and Somali Women and Children's Alliance.

Franklin County Emergency Management and Homeland Security is a local government agency which coordinates county-wide emergency/disaster planning, education, warning, response and recovery to minimize the adverse impact on area residents and property. For more information, go to www.franklincountyohio.gov/emahs/.

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(Editors: See accompanying photo captions on next page.)

PHOTO CAPTIONS

Photos and captions accompanying 5/6/10 news release headlined ‘Emergency Managers Help Local Somalis Prepare for Spring Severe Weather’



Michael R. Pannell (right), director of Franklin County Emergency Management and Homeland Security (FCEM&HS), emphasizes a point about tornado safety at a community meeting May 6 with Somali residents of northeast Columbus. Dr. Mohamud Diriye (left) of the Somali Cultural and Research Center interpreted for Pannell. The meeting was held at Somali Women & Children’s Alliance, 2210 Morse Rd.